

Message Text

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FOR ARA/PAN-BELL AND FIRFER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (WALKER, THOMAS C.)

SUBJECT: ORIENTATION VISIT OF NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF
VFW, THOMAS C. WALKER, JANUARY 6-9, 1976

REF: STATE 301382

1. VISIT OF MESSRS. WALKER AND MARLOW WAS SMOOTH AND PRODUCTIVE. ACTIVITIES PROGRAMMED BY EMBASSY INCLUDED CALL ON AMBASSADOR, BRIEFING BY EMBASSY STAFF, AND MEETINGS WITH TREATY ADVISER LOPEZ-GUEVARA, EX-FOREIGN MINISTER FERNANDO ELETA, ARCHBISHOP OF PANAMA MCGRATH, PROMINENT PANAMANIAN AND US BUSINESSMEN AND VARIOUS OTHERS. DURING STAY IN PANAMA, MR. WALKER ALSO MADE VISIT TO PANCANAL FOR BRIEFING, TOUR OF LOCKS AND CALL ON GOVERNOR PARFITT; VISIT TO USSOUTHCOM FOR BRIEFING AND CALL ON CINC, AND DINNER AND ONE AFTERNOON'S ACTIVITIES PLANNED BY ISTHMIAN VFW.

2. UPON TERMINATION OF EMBASSY PROGRAMMED ACTIVITIES ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, WALKER AND MARLOW TOLD
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CONTROL OFFICER BLACKEN AND PANAMANIAN GUESTS AT A SOCIAL

FUNCTION THAT THEIR VISIT TO PANAMA HAD GIVEN THEM A TOTALLY NEW PICTURE OF THE CANAL PROBLEM. WALKER SAID HE NOW UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR A NEW CANAL TREATY IN ORDER TO PROTECT UNITED STATES INTERESTS AND HE WOULD ENDEAVOR TO EXPLAIN TO VFW MEMBERS THAT THE ISSUE WAS NOT SIMPLY ON OF "GIVING AWAY OUR CANAL." HE REPEATED, HOWEVER, THAT EMOTIONS AMONG VFW MEMBERS RUN HIGH ON THIS ISSUE AND DOUBTED THAT HE COULD TURN THE ORGANIZATION IN FAVOR OF A NEW TREATY. SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE VISIT HE CRITICIZED U.S. EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR NOT HAVING SPOKEN OUT EARLIER AND MORE FORCEFULLY ON THIS ISSUE.

3. WALKER ALSO STATED THAT HE HAS APPOINTMENT FOR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS RETURN TO US FROM HIS CURRENT TRIP. SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION, AS HE DESCRIBED IT, WOULD BE FOREIGN AND NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY, AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS.

4. WALKER AND MARLOW GOT ALONG WELL WITH THE PANAMANIANSTHEY MET. MORE COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF VISIT AND COMPLETE LIST OF PERSONS WITH WHOM WALKER AND MARLOW MET, WILL BE TRANSMITTED BY BLACKEN-FIRFER LETTER. JORDEN

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